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Rudolph, Ulrich

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‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) on the Eternity of the World¹

Ulrich Rudolph

University of Zurich

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī is mainly known for his poetic works.² One of his *mathnawīs* entitled *Yūsuf u-Zulaykhā* offers a fascinating interpretation of the well-known story of Joseph and ranks among the most celebrated epic poems ever written in the Persian language.³ When praising his talents, however, we should not forget that his interests were not confined to literature but extended to several areas of scholarship. Actually, Jāmī studied most of the sciences taught in the Islamic world at his time, his scholarly output being almost as impressive as his poetic writings.

Jāmī was born in 817/1414 in the region of Jām, lying about midway between Mashhad and Herat. When he was still young his family moved to Herat where he began his education at the *madrasa*. Later on, he continued studying in Samarqand, which was at that time the centre of learning in the East of the Islamic world. In Samarqand, his curriculum was not restricted to the religious disciplines such as *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, and *kalām* but included the so-called rational sciences as well. One of his favourite topics seems to have been mathematics and astronomy, which he studied under the famous Qāḍīzāda al-Rūmī at the observatory of Ulugh Beg. Apparently, Jāmī excelled in both disciplines. According to our sources, he was not only able to improve the writings of his own teacher, Qāḍīzāda al-Rūmī, but also to solve

¹ This paper was delivered at Yale University on Dimitri Gutas’s birthday and dedicated to him.

² For a general introduction, see the article “Jāmī, ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Nur-al-Dīn,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. XIV (New York, 2008), 469b-482a, which consists of three parts: i. Life and Works (P. Losensky), ii. Jāmī and Sufism (H. Algar), iii. Jāmī and Persian Art (Ch. Kia). Cf. also the unpublished Ph.D. Thesis by F.F.G. Schadchehr, *Abd al-Rahman Jami: Naqshbandi Sufi, Persian Poet* (The Ohio State University, 2008) and the introduction to N. Heer, *The Precious Pearl: al-Jāmī’s al-Durrah al-Fākhīrah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).

³ The text which is preserved in more than two hundred manuscripts has been printed several times, the best edition being probably the one prepared under the direction of A. Afsāḥzād, 2 vols. (Tehran: 1999). Cf. the English translation by D. Pendleburg, *Yousuf and Zulaykha: an Allegorical Romance* (London: Octagon Press, 1980), which also contains an edition of the Persian text.

some obscure astronomical problems by the celebrated mathematician and astronomer ‘Alī al-Qūšjī.⁴

Despite these striking intellectual powers, Jāmī did not pursue a scholarly career. On the contrary: At a certain moment of his life, he is said to have abandoned his academic interests in order to devote himself to Sufism. The details of this conversion – if it actually was a conversion – are not very clear. What we are told by the biographical sources includes a variety of anecdotes combining religious motives with dream stories and an unsuccessful love affair. In any case, Jāmī was initiated into the Naqshbandī order and studied Sufi writings, in particular the works of Ibn al-‘Arabī, which were in high esteem among the Naqshbandīs. Furthermore, he decided to leave Samarqand and to return to Herat where he spent, apart from some travelling, the rest of his life.⁵

Despite his orientation towards Sufism, Jāmī remained what we would nowadays call a public intellectual. He was introduced to the court of the princes at Herat and maintained a huge network of personal contacts, partly to other scholars, partly to persons who played an important role in politics in Eastern Iran.⁶ Besides, he continued to be a prolific author, in both Arabic and Persian, and in both poetry and prose.⁷ Some of his writings became widespread throughout Iran and beyond, contributing to the growth of his fame already during his lifetime. When Jāmī died in 898/1492, he was – and here I quote Paul Losensky – “the most renowned writer in the Persian-speaking world, receiving appreciation and payment for his works from as far as India and Istanbul.”⁸

II

⁴ Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 1; Shadchehr, *Abd al-Rahman Jami*, 12.

⁵ Art. “Jāmī,” *Eliran*, XIV, 469b (Losensky) and 475-479 (Algar); cf. Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 2, and Shadchehr, *Abd al-Rahman Jami*, 13-15.

⁶ Art. “Jāmī,” *Eliran*, XIV, 470a (Losensky); cf. Shadchehr, *Abd al-Rahman Jami*, 54-62.

⁷ A description of his major writings, in poetry as well as in prose, is given by Losensky in the art. “Jāmī,” *Eliran*, XIV, 470b-473a; cf. also Shadchehr, *Abd al-Rahman Jami*, 119-151, whose description is confined, however, to the poetic works.

⁸ Art. “Jāmī,” *Eliran*, XIV, 470b.

Losensky's statement is perfectly documented by the text which is at the focus of this article. It has its own long history which is quite unusual but narrowly connected to Jāmī's fame as an outstanding scholar. In 878/1473 he went to Mecca in order to perform the *ḥajj*. On his return, he travelled via Damascus and Aleppo where he received an invitation from Mehmed II to come to Istanbul and teach there at one of the great *madrasas* recently founded by the Ottoman Sultan. Jāmī declined the invitation, although it was accompanied by a considerable amount of money. Yet, Mehmed insisted on getting in touch with the famous Persian scholar and sent, some years later, another messenger to Jāmī, this time all the way from Constantinople to Herat. The question transmitted by him was modest in comparison to the first request. For this time, Jāmī was not asked to come to the Ottoman court but only to write a book for the Ottoman Sultan. Therein, he should deal with the major differences to be found in the doctrines of the Sufīs, the theologians and the philosophers.⁹

Jāmī accepted the request and started examining the topic Mehmed II was interested in. The result of his examination is nothing else but the book which is at the focus of this article. Its title varies from manuscript to manuscript but two versions have become common among scholars. One of them is *Risāla fī Taḥqīq madhhab al-ṣūfiyya wa-l-mutakallimīn wa-l-ḥukamā'* (*A Treatise Dealing with the Verification of the Doctrines of the Sufīs, the Theologians and the Philosophers*), referring to the content of the book. The other one is *al-Durra al-fākhira* (*The Precious Pearl*), referring to its goal, namely to find among all the doctrines that which is most precious, i.e. the truth.¹⁰ Unfortunately, Mehmed II had no chance to have a look into the book. Jāmī finished the text in 886/1481 and sent it to Constantinople but the Sultan died shortly before its arrival. In the long term, however, this did not affect the success of the *Precious Pearl*. It became widespread in Iran and in the

⁹ Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 3; art. "Jāmī," *Eliran*, XIV, 470a-b (Losensky).

¹⁰ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *al-Durra al-fākhira*, ed. N. Heer and M. Behbehani (McGill University in collaboration with Tehran University, 1980); English translation by Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 31-86; the various titles are discussed by Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 8-9.

Ottoman Empire, as documented by the huge number of manuscripts preserved.¹¹ As a result, we are in the position to read an interesting testimony from the 9th/15th century Islamic world telling us much about the intellectual atmosphere and the debates being conducted at that time.

As a matter of fact, *al-Durra al-fākhira* is interesting for several reasons. It can be read from several perspectives, each reflecting another problem and another context worth elucidating. One of these contexts is the tradition of learning connected to the writings and the thought of Ibn al-‘Arabī. As we have seen, Jāmī was deeply rooted in this tradition; it motivated him to abandon the rational sciences and remained the basis of his convictions and his intellectual activities throughout his life. Consequently, it would be interesting to compare his reflections to the statements of other adherents to the Great Master such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. about 735-36/1335), Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 805/1403) and Muḥammad b. Ḥamza al-Fanārī (d. 834/1431) in order to better understand his doctrinal position as well as the development of the school in general, in particular in Eastern Iran.¹²

Another important context does not concern Iran but the Ottoman Empire. It is related to what might be called the religious and cultural politics of Mehmed II. As already mentioned, it was he who asked Jāmī to write *al-Durra al-fākhira*. Apparently, this idea was not a whim of the late Sultan but in perfect harmony with many instructions issued and activities undertaken by him during his reign. As is well-known, Mehmed founded several *madrasas* and was eager to reorganize the teaching of the sciences in the Ottoman Empire. In

¹¹ Heer and Behbehani, Introduction to Jāmī, *Durra*, 12-18; cf. Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 11-16. The text is preserved in two versions: (a) a short version, which is probably the original text sent to Mehmed II; (b) a long version, representing probably the final redaction finished by Jāmī later on. The edition of the Arabic text as well as the English translation are based on the long version.

¹² A short survey of this tradition is given by J. Morris, “Ibn ‘Arabi and His Interpreters. Part II: Influences and Interpretations,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986), 733-756, and 107 (1987), 101-119, and W.C. Chittick, “The School of Ibn ‘Arabī,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, 2 vols. (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), vol. 1, 510-523. Cf. also T. Winter, “Ibn Kemāl (d. 940/1543) on Ibn ‘Arabī’s Hagiology,” in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. A. Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 137-157, who discusses the impact of this tradition on the early Ottomans, and M. Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State of New York University Press, 2012).

order to do so, he initiated public debates , such as the famous *muḥākama* between ‘Alī al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 677/1472 or 887/1482) and Khājazāda (d. 893/1488), which concerned the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* written by al-Ġazālī.¹³ The debate was characterized by a comparatist approach: Ṭūsī and Khājazāda were asked to comment on Ġazālī’s attack against the *falāsifa*, that is to evaluate the relationship between theology and philosophy.¹⁴ And this is exactly what Jāmī did in *al-Durra al-fākhira*. It would thus be most interesting to read his text in comparison with the results presented by his Ottoman colleagues.

Finally, there is a third way to interpret the *Precious Pearl*. It consists of considering it as a testimony of how a learned Muslim author of the 9th/15th century regarded and classified the metaphysical sciences. Apparently, Jāmī distinguished three of them, that is philosophy, theology and Sufism. This tripartition corresponds perfectly to the classical Islamic taxonomy of the sciences but it differs, at least in some way, from the expectations of modern scholars. Some of them have argued that in later periods, philosophy, Sufism and parts of theology collapsed in a certain manner. As a result, a new kind of *philosophie islamique* would have begun to flourish in the 12th century, linking rational cognition, spiritual experience, gnostic insight, and prophetic knowledge.¹⁵ Other scholars have advocated that philosophy and theology were subject to a process of integration in later

¹³ U. Rudolph, art. “al-Ṭūsī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn”, *EF*, vol. XII (2004), 815a-b, and art. “*Khodja-zāde*, Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muṣṭafā,” *EF*, vol. XII (2004), 528a. The *muḥākama* gave rise to two writings which are preserved in several manuscripts and have meanwhile been printed: ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* (Hyderabad, no date) and Khājazāda, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 2 vols. (Cairo, no date).

¹⁴ Up to now, the two texts have not been subject to a detailed and thorough analysis. For a general introduction see M. S. Özervarlı, “Arbitrating between al-Ghazālī and the Philosophers: The *Tahāfut* Commentaries in the Ottoman Intellectual Context,” in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, vol. 1, ed. G. Tamer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 375-397. Some particular topics raised in these texts are discussed in the proceedings of the colloquium on Khājazāda which was held in Bursa on 22nd-24th October 2010: *Uluslararası Hocazāde Sempozyumu*, eds. T. Yücedoğlu, O. S. Koloğlu, U. M. Kılavuz and K. Gömbeyaz (Bursa: Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2011); see in particular C. Karadaş, “Hocazāde’nin Tehāfūt’ünde Sebeplilik,” *Uluslararası*, 163-173; L. W. C. (Eric) van Lit, “The Chapters on God’s Knowledge in Khojāzāda’s and ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Studies on al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*,” *Uluslararası*, 175-199, and A. Shihadeh, “Khojāzāda on al-Ghazālī’s Criticism of the Philosophers’ Proof of the Existence of God. *Uluslararası*, 141-161.

¹⁵ See among others H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, transl. by L. Sherrard with the assistance of Ph. Sherrard (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), introduction, as well as Ch. Jambet, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 62, 66-69 and 112-114.

centuries that changed both of them and made them a common intellectual enterprise.¹⁶ At first sight, Jāmī's testimony appears to contradict these views completely. However, before situating and classifying his presentation in *al-Durra al-fākhira*, it seems appropriate to have a look into the details. The fact that he distinguishes philosophy, theology and Sufism as they had been distinguished, for instance, in the fourth/tenth century, does not necessarily prove that, at his time, all of them existed the same way, i.e. separately, as before. On the contrary: What Jāmī tells us about the three disciplines rather suggests that they have been subject to considerable modification, and it seems very promising to follow his reflections on this topic more in depth.

All in all, we may thus conclude that the *Precious Pearl* is a book worth examining. Despite it being a short text, it contains numerous pieces of information which can be valuable in different respects. However, before situating the book in its historical and intellectual context, we have to read it carefully and follow its argumentation step by step.

III

According to Heer's edition, the text of *al-Durra al-fākhira* can be divided into eleven chapters. All of them focus on one major problem: How can we describe God's essence, His attributes and His acts? Yet Jāmī tries to distinguish the individual aspects of the problem in order to discuss each of them separately and in its own right. The list of topics examined by him runs as follows:¹⁷

¹⁶ See in particular the important publications by R. Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (ca. 1100-1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, eds. P. Adamson, H. Baltussen and M. W. F. Stone (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2004), vol. 2, 149-191, and "Philosophy and Theology (Islam)," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. R. Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vol. 2, 698-706.

¹⁷ The list follows the division of the text as suggested by Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 6-7; cf. Heer and Behbehani, Introduction to Jāmī, *Durra*, 7.

- 1) The nature of God's existence and its relation to His essence, that is, is it superadded to His essence or identical with it?
- 2) God's unity and the necessity of demonstrating it.
- 3) The nature of God's attributes and their relation to His essence, that is, are they superadded to His essence or identical with it?
- 4) The nature of God's knowledge and the problem of attributing knowledge to God without compromising His unity or necessary existence.
- 5) God's knowledge of particulars and the problems encountered in attributing this type of knowledge to God.
- 6) The nature of God's will and whether His will is an attribute distinct from His knowledge.
- 7) The nature of God's power and the related question of God is a free agent or a necessary agent.
- 8) The question of whether the universe is eternal or originated together with the question of whether an eternal universe can result from a free agent or not.
- 9) The nature of God's speech and the question of whether the Qur'an is eternal or created.
- 10) The voluntary acts of humans and whether they occur through the power of God or man.
- 11) The emanation of the universe from God and the question of whether it is possible for multiple effects to result from a single cause.

Of course, all of these chapters deserve to be discussed in detail. But we must confine ourselves to the topic which is at the centre of our workshop. This is treated in chapter 8, devoted to "the question of whether the universe is eternal or originated, together with the

question of whether an eternal universe can result from a free agent or not”, and so we are now going to examine the arguments given there.¹⁸

IV

Chapter 8 opens as follows:

“It should be noted that the theologians and, indeed, the philosophers as well, agreed that what is eternal (*al-qadīm*) does not depend on a free agent (*al-fā‘il al-mukhtār*), because the act of the free agent is preceded by the intention to bring something into existence (*masbūq bi-l-qaṣḍi ilā l-ijād*) and is of necessity contemporaneous with the nonexistence of that thing whose bringing-into-existence is intended (*muqārīn li-‘adami mā quṣida ijāduhu ḍarūratan*). The theologians affirmed the free choice of the agent (*fa-l-mutakallimūna athbatū khtiyāra l-fā‘il*) and denied [the existence of] an eternal effect, whereas the philosophers affirmed [the existence of] an eternal effect (*wa-l-ḥukamā’u athbatū wujūda l-athari l-qadīm*) and denied the free choice [of the agent]. As for the Sufis, may God sanctify their souls, they allowed the dependence of an eternal effect on a free agent (*fa-hum jawwazū stināda l-athari l-qadīmi ilā l-fā‘ili l-mukhtār*) and combined affirmation of [the agent’s] free choice with belief in the existence of an eternal effect.”¹⁹

Jāmī’s exposition is short but sophisticated. He argues on two levels: one of them describes the different views of the theologians, the philosophers and the Sufis; the other explains the theoretical background of their disagreement. Without doubt, the first level was well-known to every learned Muslim living in the 9th/15th century. In contrast, the

¹⁸ A short analysis of this chapter has already been given by N. Heer in a three-page paper entitled “Al-Jami on Whether an Eternal Effect Can Result from an Agent with Choice”. The paper, which was read at the 1968 annual meeting of the Western Branch of the American Oriental Society in San Francisco and updated in December 2008, has never been published by Heer, but is accessible on his homepage (<https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/4883>).

¹⁹ Jāmī, *Durra*, 28.6-12; I quote the English translation by Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 57.

explanations given on the second were not common knowledge but reveal Jāmī's own reflections on the topic. As he explains, the different positions of the *mutakallimūn* and the *ḥukamā'* can be traced back to the same basic assumption. Both of them are convinced that what is eternal cannot depend on a Creator whose characteristic is to be a free agent and whose acts are not determined by necessity but proceed from his will.

According to Jāmī, this assumption is erroneous. There is no proof that the idea of an eternal world is incompatible with the idea of a freely acting Creator. On the contrary: They correspond very well, and that is what the Sufis have recognized. The next question is thus to know how they substantiate their doctrine. On what grounds do they negate the assumption shared by the theologians and the philosophers? And what are the arguments given by them in order to defend the compatibility of the concepts of eternity and free agency?

Jāmī gives two reasons, the first of which runs as follows:

“They [i.e. The Sufis] said: Clear mystical revelation (*al-kashf al-ṣāriḥ*) has shown that [a] if a thing necessitates an entity through its essence (*al-shay' idā qtaḍā amran li-dhātih*) rather than through a condition superadded to its essence, which would be what is called ‘other’ (*ay lā bi-sharṭin zā'idin 'alay-hi wa-huwa l-musammā gayran*), or [b] if that thing includes one or more conditions which are identical with its essence, such as relations and attributions (*wa-in ishtamala 'alā sharṭin aw shurūṭin hiya 'aynu l-dhati ka-l-nisabi wa-l-idāfāt*), then it continues [necessitating] that entity and endures with it as long as its essence endures (*fā-lā yazālu 'alā dhālika l-amri wa-yadūmu lahu mā dāmat dhātuhu*), as, for example, the Most Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a'lā*), for it was the first thing created, there being no intermediary (*wāṣiṭa*) between it and its Creator, and it endures as long as [its Creator] endures.”²⁰

The argument is very clear: Jāmī refers to two logical concepts allowing him to suppose a necessary connection between God's essence and His creation. One of them is

²⁰ Jāmī, *Durra*, 28.12-29.1; Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 57.

implication or concomitance, in Arabic *talāzum* or *iltizām*; the other is inclusion, in Arabic *taḍammun*.²¹ In both cases, however, he avoids the technical terms used by the philosophers when referring to these concepts. Instead of *talāzum*, he simply says that one thing necessitates (*iqtaḍā*) another (see sentence [a]); instead of *taḍammun*, he uses the Arabic word *ishtamala* (see sentence [b]). Moreover, the whole argument is embedded in a kind of religious discourse. Apparently, Jāmī is eager to present the doctrine of the Sufis in a way familiar to them and appealing to a readership mainly familiar with the categories and expressions of religious language.

In any case, the passage just quoted contains three Arabic expressions best explained this way. First: When introducing the concept of inclusion, Jāmī illustrates it by referring to the Most Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a‘lā*). This is certainly not an accidental example. The Most Exalted Pen was a symbol much appreciated in various Islamic traditions and by many religious scholars, among them the Sufis. According to the latter, it is to be understood as the first objective individualisation proceeding from the Creator and imprinting the forms of existence of all creatures upon the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*).²² Second: When introducing the concept of implication, Jāmī says: “If a thing necessitates an entity through its essence ...” (*al-shay’ idā qtaḍā amran li-dhāti-hi*) using the Arabic word *amr* in order to express what Heer has translated as “entity”. Of course, this is one of the possibilities to denote “entity” or “something” in Arabic, other possible ways being, for instance, *šay’*, *mawjūd*, or *ma’nā*. But I wonder if Jāmī, being careful with his linguistic choices, really chose it by chance. *Amr* is also the word many times used in the Qur’ān in order to denote God’s command (*amr Allāh*).²³ And as a matter of fact, God’s command is a perfect example to convince religious scholars that there actually exists an entity which is immediately connected

²¹ This is the standard terminology as established by Avicenna; see e.g. *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic*, Translation and Notes by Asad Q. Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10-11 and Index.

²² See e.g. Corbin, *History*, 55-56; an interesting example is to be found in Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics/Iksīr al-‘arīfīn*, A parallel English-Arabic text transl., introd. and annotated by William C. Chittick (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), 8n.31 and 70-71n.55-57.

²³ Qur’ān 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 14:32, 45:12 etc.

to God and necessitated through His essence. – Third: Despite being based on logical grounds, the argument is introduced as follows: “Pure unveiling”, or to take Heer’s translation: “Clear mystical revelation has shown”: *afāda al-kashf al-ṣāriḥ*. This is perhaps the most striking indication of Jāmī’s strategy of intertwining Sufi convictions and philosophical epistemology. The Sufis, as described by him, owe their knowledge to pure unveiling or clear mystical revelation. But what is unveiled to them corresponds perfectly to rationality and the rules of philosophical logic.

This is confirmed by the second reason given by the Sufis in his text. It runs as follows:

“It is as if they had adhered to what al-Āmidī said to the effect that the priority of bringing-into-existence by intention to the existence of the effect is just like the priority of bringing-into-existence by necessity [to the existence of the effect] (*sabq l-ijādi qaṣdan ‘alā l-ma‘lūli ka-sabqi l-ijādi ijāban*). Just as the priority of necessary bringing-into-existence is an essential rather than a temporal priority (*sabq bi-l-dhāt lā bi-l-zamān*), so also is it possible here for intentional bringing-into-existence to be contemporaneous with the thing intended but to be prior to it in essence (*an yakūna l-ijādu l-qaṣdiyyu ma‘a wujūdi l-maqṣūdi zamānan wa-mutaqaddiman ‘alay-hi bi-l-dhāt*). In this way it is possible for a certain existent to be necessarily existent from eternity through the Necessary Existent in Himself even though He is a free agent (*wājiban fī-l-azali bi-l-wājibi li-dhātihi ma‘a kawnihi mukhtāran*). Thus, the two are contemporaneous, although they differ with respect to essential priority and posteriority, just as the movement of the hand is essentially prior to the movement of the ring even though it is contemporaneous with it.”²⁴

It may be surprising that Jāmī is so bold as to refer to Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) in this context. As Heer has already noted,²⁵ he does not quote him directly, referring instead to al-Āmidī’s doctrine as presented by al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) in

²⁴ Jāmī, *Durra*, 29.1-7; Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 57-58.

²⁵ Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 82.

his commentary on al-Ījī's (d. 736/1335) *Mawāqif*.²⁶ Still, Āmidī's views were controversial,²⁷ and above all, he was not a Sufi. So, how can he testify that the doctrine of the Sufis is the right one? As it turns out, however, this is exactly what made him attractive to Jāmī, because it fitted the strategy underlying the whole text of *al-Durra al-fākhira*. This consisted in demonstrating that Sufism, philosophy and to a lesser degree theology were not opposed to each other but, at least partly, convergent, if only we turn to the best arguments of the leading scholars.

Yet, despite this strategy, the particular reason presented by Āmidī in our context raises a problem. As it appears, he accepted the description of God as acting in terms of "intention" (*qaṣd*). Now, intention was a category usually applied to human acts. For a long time by this point, Muslim theologians had made use of it in order to analyze the different aspects of our acting, that is our motives (*dawā'ir*), our intention, our will (*irāda*), our capacity of acting (*istiṭā'a*, *qudra*) and the act itself.²⁸ So, how can this category denoting just one single aspect of our temporal and imperfect activities be applied to God?

The question is crucial, and Jāmī takes his time to answer it extensively. He does so by presenting two objections raised against the doctrine of Āmidī both of which are immediately responded. The first objection including its response reads as follows:

"It may be objected that when we consult our inner sense (*wijdān*) and properly observe the meaning of intention, we learn of necessity that it is impossible to intend to bring into existence something [already] existing, because intention must be contemporaneous

²⁶ Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, printed together with 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 8 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1907). The quotation is to be found in vol. III, 183.2-184.3. For al-Jurjānī's life and works see now Josef van Ess, *Die Träume der Schulweisheit: Leben und Werk des 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ġurġānī (gest. 816/1413)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013). However, it seems questionable whether al-Āmidī actually held the doctrine attributed to him by al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī. Hasan Čelebī al-Fanārī (d. 886/1481), one of the later commentators of the *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, had doubts about that. In his *Hāshiya* to Jurjānī's *Sharḥ*, he quotes Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), who wrote in his *Sharḥ al-maqāṣid* that al-Āmidī had mentioned this doctrine in his *Abkār al-aḥkār* but only as an argument to be refuted; see Hasan Čelebī al-Fanārī, *al-Hāshiya*, printed together with 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, vol. III, 183.18-27.

²⁷ Gerhard Endress, "Die dreifache Ancilla: Hermeneutik und Logik im Werk des Sayfaddīn al-Āmidī," in *Logik und Theologie: Das Organon im arabischen und lateinischen Mittelalter*, eds. D. Perler and U. Rudolph (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 117-145: 128.

²⁸ Daniel Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane* (Paris: Vrin, 1980), 47-48, cf. 220.

(*muqārin*) with the nonexistence of the effect. Thus, the effect of the free agent must definitely be originated in time (*ḥādith*). – To this we should answer that the priority of intention to bringing-into-existence is like the priority of the bringing-into-existence to existence in that they are both essential priorities. Thus, their contemporaneous existence is possible because what [alone] is impossible is the intention of bringing-into-existence something [already] existing through a prior existence (*al-muḥāl huwa l-qaṣḍu ilā tājādi l-mawjūdi bi-wujūdin qablu*). In summary, if intention is a sufficient [cause] for the existence of the thing intended, then it is contemporaneous with it (*wa-bi-l-jumlati fa-l-qaṣḍu idā kāna kāfiyan fī wujūdi l-maqṣūdi kāna ma‘a-hu*). If is not sufficient, it may precede it temporally, as is the case when we intend our acts (*wa-idā lam yakun kāfiyan fa-qad yataqaddamu ‘alay-hi zamānan ka-qaṣḍi-nā ilā af‘āli-nā*).”²⁹

As it turns out, Jāmī’s response to the objection is a distinction. In accordance with Jurjānī, he argues that the word “intention” has different meanings when applied to man and when applied to God. In the case of man, intention is just one element among several others which altogether are necessary to constitute our acting. Taken in itself, it is not a sufficient cause for the existence of the thing intended by us. This is Jāmī’s explanation, and we may add that it actually corresponds to our experience as we often intend to do something without ever realizing it. In contrast to that, God’s intention is always effective. For him, it suffices to intend something, and the thing is done. Like any other of His attributes His intention cannot be but perfect and can never fail nor be restricted by something else.

This idea is corroborated by the next passage in our text likewise consisting of an objection and its response. It stresses another aspect of the same problem but ends up with a solution quite similar to the one before. The text runs as follows:

“It may further be objected that when we consult our inner sense and observe the meaning of intention, we conclude that the intention to bring something into existence (*tahṣīl al-*

²⁹ Jāmī, *Durra*, 29.8-ult.; Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 58. The objection as well as the response are taken from Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, III, 184.6-185.5.

shay’) and to effect it (*al-ta’thīr fīhi*) is inconceivable except when that thing is not yet in existence (*lā yu’qalu illā ḥāla ‘adami ḥuṣūlih*), whereas to necessitate it (*ījāb*) is inconceivable except when it is in existence, even though its [cause] is prior to it in essence (*bi-l-dhāt*). This interpretation is self-evident and depends only on the proper conception of the meaning of intention and will. – To this we should answer that one who consults his inner sense perceives only his own imperfect, originated will and intention, not [God’s] perfect (*kāmila*), eternal will, and there is no doubt that the two differ qualitatively (*wa-lā shakka anna-humā yakhtalifāni ḥukman*). The former is not sufficient to bring the thing willed (*al-murād*) into existence, and the thing willed, therefore, lags greatly behind it (*yatakhallafu l-murādu ‘anhā kathīran*). The latter, however, is sufficient, and consequently the thing willed cannot lag behind it. How, then, can one of these wills be compared to the other?”³⁰

This point being clarified, there remains only one last question. How can we ensure that this is the appropriate interpretation of God’s attributes? And what is the reason that scholars such as philosophers, theologians and Sufīs disagree about the right way to understand them and to describe their perfection? Once more, Jāmī’s answer is long and extensive. His elaboration on this point can be read as his final word on the problem of “whether an eternal universe can depend on a free agent”. At the same time, however, it is an opening to further reflections revealing more than anything before that our author adhered to the doctrine of Ibn al-‘Arabī.

The last passage of chapter 8 reads as follows:

“It should be known that the attributes of perfection (*al-ṣifāt al-kamāliyya*), such as knowledge, will and power, can be considered in two ways (*lahā i’tibārān*). One of them is to consider their relationship to the Truth, bearing in mind His Absolute unity (*waḥdati-hi al-ṣirfa*) and the plane of His independence of the worlds. Considered in this way the

³⁰ Jāmī, *Durra*, 30.1-7; Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 58-59. This part of Jāmī’s argument is not taken from Jurjānī.

attributes are eternal (*azaliyya*) and everlasting (*abadiyya*), perfect with no trace of imperfection in them. The other is [to consider] the relationship of the uncreated quiddities (*al-māhiyyāti al-ghayri l-ma'jūla*) to His existential light (*nūri-hi l-wujūdī*) as analogous to the relationship of mirrors to what is impressed in them. It is the nature of the Manifest in His attributes of perfection (*min sha'ni l-Mutajallī bi-ṣifāti-hi l-kamāliyya*) to appear in accordance with the place of manifestation (*al-majlā*), rather than in accordance with Himself. Thus, when He manifests Himself in a certain thing, His attributes of perfection appear in it in accordance with that thing rather than in accordance with the Manifest. Imperfection (*al-naqṣ*), then, attaches to the attributes because of the imperfection of the place [of manifestation] (*al-maḥall*). – Therefore, when a mystic (*al-ʿarīf*) perceives these attributes through his inner sense (*wijdān*), he attributes the imperfection to the lack of receptivity in the place [of manifestation] (*ʿadam qābiliyyat al-maḥall*) and ascribes them to God as complete and sanctified above any trace of imperfection. ... One who is not a mystic (*ghayru l-ʿarīf*), on the other hand, either ascribes these attributes to God as imperfect without differentiation of the planes [of existence] from each other (*min ghayri tamayyuzi ba'di l-marātibi ʿan ba'din*), or else denies them of Him completely. May God be high exalted above what the evil doers say.”³¹

At the end, we have thus arrived at the doctrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī.³² Jāmī started his exposition by presenting the different doctrines of the philosophers, the theologians and the Sufis on a particular question but he finishes it by confessing that only the Great Master had been able to solve the problem at stake. As we have seen, the solution formulated by him is a

³¹ Jāmī, *Durra*, 30.8-31.6; Heer, *Precious Pearl*, 59-60.

³² For Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine see, among numerous other publications, William C. Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), and *Ibn ʿArabī: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: One World, 2005). Another interesting document underlining Jāmī's adherence to Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine is his *Risāla fī l-Wujūd* which has been edited and translated by N. Heer, "Al-Jāmī's *Treatise on Existence*", in *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. P. Morewedge (Albany: State of New York Press, 1979), 223-256.

kind of synthesis. It combines the idea of a free acting Creator with the idea of the eternity of world thereby connecting the views of the theologians and the philosophers which had always been supposed to be mutually exclusive. As a result, the Sufis as presented in the *Durra* can rightly claim to be the real verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*). They are the scholars who have access to pure unveiling and to logical reasoning which enables them to solve the problems raised by their colleagues in other disciplines. Or, to put it in Jāmī's poetic language: True Sufism is the precious pearl reflecting the whole intellectual tradition of Islam and collecting all the light Muslim philosophers and theologians have been striving for.